

DIVIDED OPINIONS ABOUT ADATPELA: A STUDY OF PELA TAMILOU–SIRI-SORI–HUTUMURI

SYLVIA HUWÄË
UNIVERSITY OF NIJMEGEN

This article is based on research that I conducted on the islands of Ambon and Saparua. The subject of my research was pela, an important social phenomenon in Central Maluku. It examines two major questions: (1) To what extent does this social system have normative force? (2) Do pela rules come into conflict with personal standards and values? It also assumes two basic premises: (a) that the collectivistic nature of pela accounts for its normative force; and (b) that pela customs can be understood in terms of roles (where “roles” can be defined as sets of “rules” that role takers are expected to observe). The article focuses on one pela alliance in particular: that between the people of Hutumuri, Siri-Sori, and Tamilou. This pela is special in that it constitutes an environment in which Moslems and Christians can live together in peace, and help each other in difficult times.

1. Introduction

The pela alliance is an important social institution in Central Maluku. Pela is an alliance between two or more villages, which may lie at a considerable distance from each other, sometimes even on two different islands. The alliance is based on rules, customs, and prohibitions that must be observed by the members. The stricter the rules, the stronger the pela. In popular language, the pela rules and customs are called adatpela.¹ The most common pela duty is to help or support other members of the pela

¹This research is described in detail in the extended thesis: “Living in two worlds: Research into the orientations toward pela of the Malukan people in the Central Maluku Islands” [my trans.], written under the supervision of the Department of Cultural & Religious Psychology of the Catholic University of Nijmegen. The starting point of this research project was a psychological approach to adatpela.

unconditionally. If his crop fails, for instance, a farmer can appeal to his pela members for financial support.

The pela system thus offers advantages, but it can also give rise to conflicts. For instance, if a boy and a girl fall in love even though their pela membership forbids marriage, the feelings and needs of the couple clash with those of the adatpela. I thus formulated two questions concerning adatpela: (1) Do pela members take adatpela for granted? (2) To what extent does the adatpela come into conflict with the members' own sentiments? To find an answer to the first question, I conducted interviews and distributed questionnaires.² In this way I hoped to be able to establish what norms and values pela members take for granted and how widespread adherence to pela rules is. I approached the second question by asking respondents to give their opinion about the pela rules: to what extent do they harmonize or come into conflict with personal sentiments?

I will begin by discussing pela in general. Subsequently, I will go into a special category of pela—the pela gandong—and in this context I will pay special attention to the pela alliance between the villages of Tamilou, Siri-Sori, and Hutumuri. After that, I will discuss my research results in connection with certain aspects of adat. The article will conclude with a return to the two initial research questions.

2. Pela

Pela is an alliance that the ancestors of one village at one time concluded with those of another village or villages. The alliance was initially the result of a historical event, the memory of which is still recalled in old songs and legends. The reason for and nature of such an alliance may differ from pela to pela: to prevent fights, to strengthen family ties, to conclude a peace treaty, to establish friendship, or to promote mutual trade. The conclusion of a pela treaty is usually established in an adat ceremony in which the participating villages take a solemn oath. "It is this powerful oath, backed by terrible curse which, in Ambonese thinking, assures that the obligations of the alliance are kept" (Bartels 1977: 230).

²A total of 15 respondents were interviewed; 9 men and 6 women. The questionnaire was planned on the basis of the data obtained in the interview. The questionnaire was filled by 82 respondents; 45 men and 37 women. It served to establish how widely certain experiences and opinions are spread in the target groups.

From time to time, pela members engage in a ceremony to “heat up” the pela (*bikin panas pela*). “In some alliances, the pela is heated up at regular intervals, say every four to seven years. In others the ceremony is held about once in a generation, while in some cases, the alliance has been passive for decades, or has lain dormant ever since its conclusion” (Bartels 1977: 240–241). A pela alliance is heated up when the participating villages feel that the alliance is in danger of sinking into oblivion, or is threatening to fall apart. But a pela alliance can also be heated up in times of economic depression or social unrest.

A pela alliance consists of rules and agreements that must be observed by the members. Violation of the rules and customs can result in sickness or death. Such rules may include a ban on marriage between pela members, provision of support in times of war, help with the harvest, or help in building a village church or mosque. Pela members also have to show respect to each other. They address each other as *pela*. Elderly people are called *oom pela* or *tante pela*. The origin of this custom probably dates from the times of headhunting and wars between tribes. Many pela alliances date from the fifteenth and sixteenth century, during which great confusion and uncertainty were caused by the arrival of Islam, and then Christianity shortly afterward (Werkgroep Pameran Masohi Maluku 1984: 52).

The word *pela* has various meanings, including ‘brother’ and ‘trusted friend’. Van Hoëvell’s (1881: 103) comments thus:

Likewise it is true that today it has the meaning of brother, trusted friend. Yes, this is even true in a very broad sense, so that when an Amboinese calls somebody *beta poenja pela*, he indicates a very close friendly relationship, even if they are not members of the same pela.

Pela can be classified further into a number of primary and secondary categories (Tutupary 1985: 13–15): (1) *pela tuni* or *pela keras*, with the two secondary categories of (a) *pela tumpah darah* and (b) *pela batu karang*; (2) *pela tempat sirih*; (3) *pela gandong*. This work will concentrate on the last category.

Pela gandong

The word *gandong* derives from the word *kandungan*, meaning ‘uterus’ or ‘womb’ (Tutupary 1985: 4–5). Members of the *pela gandong* respect the rules of their alliance (rules relating to marriage, mutual assistance, and customs to be observed) as well as the sanctions that are imposed for

breaking these rules. Sanctions may include banishment or even death. In *pela gandong* “common ancestry is claimed as the basis for the alliances of two or more villages. A common ancestor is seldom, if ever, claimed by the entire population of the villages of the alliances, however, usually only one or two clans on either side are involved” (Bartels 1977: 164).

An example of a *pela* alliance that comes under this category is the alliance between the villages of *Tamilou* (a Moslem village), *Siri-Sori* (divided into *Siri-Sori Serani*, a Christian village, and *Siri-Sori Islam*, a Moslem village) and *Hutumuri* (a Christian village). In this *pela* the members address each other as *bongso*, meaning ‘youngest’. For the origin of this form of address, we have to turn to the history of the alliance.

The origin of the *pela* of *Tamilou*, *Siri-Sori*, and *Hutumuri*

The story (according to Rehatelanit 1971: 24–29) begins with the departure of three brothers, *Temanole*, *Semanole*, and *Silaloi*, from the village of *Hatumeten* on the island of *Seram*. The village of *Hotebanggoi* is at war and the three brothers go there to lend a helping hand. When the war is over, they decide to go and find a safe and quiet place where they can build a life of their own, without the protection of their parents. They sail along the shore of *Seram* until they reach the Islamic village of *Hatumari*. The eldest brother, *Temanole*, likes this place very much. He gets along well with the people who live there and adopts their customs. He decides to stay. Before *Semanole* and *Silaloi* leave their brother, they swear not to forget each other and never to use violence against each other. He who breaks this oath will be cursed and the curse will remain valid until the fourth generation. The swearing of the oath is accompanied by a ritual in which the little fingers of the brothers’ left hands are tied together with the vein of the *daun jai-seribu* plant. Then the tops of the three fingers are cut off. The blood is caught in a wooden bowl, and the three brothers drink it while taking the oath.

Later it turns out that *Temanole* has settled in the neighborhood of *Hatumari* and has founded the village of *Musitoa Amalatu*, also called *Tamilou*. In the meantime, *Semanole* and *Silaloi* continue their journey. One night, when they are at sea, they encounter a storm. The next morning their boat is stranded at *Ananas Harbour*, in the back of the corner of *Ouw* on the island of *Saparua*. The youngest brother, *Silaloi*, does not want to continue the journey and, after taking leave of *Semanole*, he walks inland. Eventually he arrives and settles at the village of *Louhata Amalatu*, now

called Siri-Sori. (In 1717, a religious controversy caused the village to split into Siri-Sori Islam and Siri-Sori Serani).

The middle brother, Semanole, continues his journey alone. He drops his anchor in the bay of Baguala on the island of Ambon and stays in the village of Wai Jori for a while. After that he goes into the mountains and rests a while in the village of Leunusa. Then he returns from the mountains and eventually settles at a village called Siwa Samasuru Amalatu, now called Hutumuri.

The oath sworn by the three brothers is still remembered in the three different villages. It is not clear why the pela alliance of the three brothers was adopted by the other inhabitants of the villages. Presumably the brothers started families in the villages concerned and in this way created a network of family ties with the inhabitants, drawing them into the alliance as well. The relationship that evolved in this way is like the relationship between an older brother or sister and a younger brother or sister. Just as the older one takes care of the younger one, the bongso, each village now takes care of the other two villages, as if they were the younger ones. The inhabitants of the three villages regard each other as bongso and address each other accordingly.

Characteristics of the Tamilou–Siri-Sori–Hutumuri pela alliance

Pela imposes rules on its members. In my interviews with inhabitants from Hutumuri, Siri-Sori, and Tamilou, the following rules were frequently mentioned. (They are listed in random order, not in order of strictness.)

- It is forbidden to become angry with a bongso
- It is forbidden to marry a bongso
- It is forbidden to refuse a request from a bongso
- It is forbidden to lie to a bongso
- It is forbidden to make fun of a bongso
- One must help a bongso when (s)he is in trouble
- One must help and support a bongso in busy and difficult times (weddings, deaths, etc.)

There are various sanctions for violating the rule that forbids intermarriage between bongsos. They vary according to the adat of the village in question. Offenders may be whipped with coconut palm leaves (*salele*) by the other villagers, to the accompaniment of gongs and drums. They may also be thrashed or banished or threatened with an unhappy marriage, handicapped offspring, or even death.

In Siri-Sori, opinions on the pela membership of Siri-Sori Islam are divided. From my conversations with inhabitants of Siri-Sori Serani, it became clear that they no longer consider Siri-Sori Islam to be a member of the pela alliance. This has to do with marriages that were contracted between people from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou, and the fact that there were fights between people from Siri-Sori Serani and Siri-Sori Islam. This would not have occurred had they been bongsos. Later, we will see that others also have their own views of the rule that forbids intermarriage.

3. Research methods

I used qualitative interviews and questionnaires to obtain data for my research. The qualitative interviews were conducted in order to gain insight into the experiences and emotional lives of the target groups. The questionnaire served to establish how widely certain experiences and opinions are shared among members of the target groups.

The adatpela rules that were mentioned during the interviews were also put to the respondents who filled out the questionnaire. The rule about helping other pela members was presented three times, except to the respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Siri-Sori Serani, to whom it was presented twice. This was done because respondents' feelings about these rules might depend on the distance between the villages, or on the degree of emotional intimacy they felt toward another village.

The adatpela provides advantages such as financial or material support; but it also restricts the emotional life of the pela members. Pela members are forced to suppress their feelings of anger or love toward pela members. In addition, the adatpela prescribes that they must not refuse any requests from another pela member. Such situations can lead to conflicts and force pela members to choose between observing the adatpela and following their own inclinations. To gain insight into possible conflicts between personal opinions and the adatpela, I asked the respondents the following questions.

1. How do you feel about the pela rules of conduct?
2. If marriage is prohibited, what do you think of alternatives, such as courtship, cohabitation, and having a child out of wedlock, or living apart and still having a child? (The question about courtship was presented once to all respondents. The other questions were asked six times because of the possible love affairs between the villagers.)
3. Was there ever a situation in which you acted according to the rules?

4. If the occasion arises, will you follow the rules?

4. Differences of opinion among pela members

I will discuss the findings of my survey under four thematic headings: adatpela rules of conduct, alternative relationships, acting according to adat, and predictions about future behavior.

Adat rules of conduct

How do the respondents feel about the adat rules of conduct? It appears that their relations with other pela members are at least in part determined by their personal views. Respondents from Hutumuri and Siri-Sori Serani, for instance, feel that whether or not one is allowed to become angry with a fellow pela member depends on the circumstances. Respondents from Siri-Sori Islam tend to let the circumstances decide whether lying is allowed. And finally, some respondents from Siri-Sori Serani think that making fun of a fellow pela member is allowed.

In pela gandong, intermarriage is forbidden. However, opinions vary on this issue, too. The respondents from Siri-Sori Islam consider marrying someone from Hutumuri improper, while marrying someone from Tamilou is thought acceptable. (See Table 1.) This may be accounted for by the fact that Siri-Sori split into Siri-Sori Islam and Siri-Sori Serani. The respondents from Siri-Sori Islam then approve of a marriage with a pela member from Tamilou. What do inhabitants of Tamilou think about marriage to someone from Siri-Sori Islam? Although most of them consider such marriages unacceptable, there were also a considerable number who wavered on this issue.

Table 1 shows that respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou hold different views on the rule that forbids marriage to a fellow bongso. The pela members from Siri-Sori Serani and Hutumuri are firmly convinced that intermarriage is out of the question, irrespective of the other member's village. In order to uphold the adatpela, sanctions are imposed on violators. The respondents from Hutumuri and Siri-Sori Serani firmly believe that a violation of the intermarriage rule will lead to illness or death, or to a childless marriage. The respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou do not share that belief, but showed nevertheless that they were afraid of such consequences.

The replies of the respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou indicate that they share the motivation of the other pela members (fear of the

consequences), although they have different normative orientations (marriage among respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou is or may be acceptable).

Table 1. Pela members from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou, and their opinions on intermarriage

<i>pela members from</i>	<i>marriage to bongso from</i>	<i>o.k.</i>	<i>do not know</i>	<i>own decision</i>	<i>not o.k.</i>	<i>n</i>
Siri-Sori I.	Tamilou	12	2	2	6	22
Q = 0.0005 ³	Hutumuri	–	4	–	18	22
Tamilou	Siri-Sori S.	–	–	–	22	22
Q = 0.0001	Siri-Sori I.	2	6	3	11	22
	Hutumuri	–	1	1	20	22

Alternative relationships

Thus, marriage to a pela member is generally forbidden, but what do the respondents think of alternative relationships: courtship, cohabitation, and having a child out of wedlock, or living apart and having a child out of wedlock? Most respondents find courtship unacceptable and fear its consequences. Their opinion on cohabitation and having a child are presented in the form of a survey of possible combinations between villages. The combinations are as follows:

Siri-Sori Serani	+ Tamilou	(SSS+Tam)
Tamilou	+ Hutumuri	(Tam+Hut)
Siri-Sori Islam	+ Siri-Sori Serani	(SSI+SSS)
Siri-Sori Islam	+ Hutumuri	(SSI+Hut)
Siri-Sori Serani	+ Hutumuri	(SSS+Hut)
Siri-Sori Islam	+ Tamilou	(SSI+Tam)

The combination SSI+SSS deserves special consideration. Because the villages were originally one village, I assumed that they could not regard each other as bongso. This combination could therefore be left out. However, the

³The Cochran Q test provides a method for testing whether three or more matched sets of frequencies or proportions differ significantly among themselves. The matching may be based on relevant characteristics of the different subjects, or on the fact that the same subjects are used under different conditions. The Cochran Q test is particularly suitable when the data are in a nominal scale or are dichotomized ordinal information (Siegel 1955: 161).

respondents might feel differently and so I included this combination. The inclusion of the SSI+SSS combination also has the advantage of allowing us insight into the relations between the villages and into the respondents' views on the relative importance of the different villages in terms of pela.

Table 2: Pela members on having children and living together

<i>pela mem- bers from</i>	<i>village combination</i>	<i>allowed</i>	<i>do not know</i>	<i>own decision</i>	<i>not allowed</i>	<i>n</i>
Hutumuri Q = 0.0000	SSS+Tam	–	1	–	20	21
	Tam+Hut	–	–	–	21	21
	SSI+SSS	–	1	10	10	21
	SSI+Hut	–	–	–	21	21
	SSS+Hut	–	–	–	21	21
	SSI+Tam	–	1	–	20	21
Tamilou Q = 0.0000	SSS+Tam	–	1	1	20	22
	Tam+Hut	–	1	1	20	22
	SSI+SSS	1	11	5	5	22
	SSI+Hut	–	7	5	10	22
	SSS+Hut	1	9	4	8	22
	SSI+Tam	2	2	1	17	22
Siri–Sori Serani Q = 0.0027	SSS+Tam	1	1	1	14	17
	Tam+Hut	3	1	–	12	16
	SSI+SSS	6	2	2	7	17
	SSI+Hut	3	3	3	8	17
	SSS+Hut	3	1	1	12	17
	SSI+Tam	6	1	4	6	17
Siri–Sori Islam Q = 0.0879	SSS+Tam	4	5	4	9	22
	Tam+Hut	5	6	1	10	22
	SSI+SSS	4	4	1	13	22
	SSI+Hut	3	6	1	12	22
	SSS+Hut	4	6	3	9	22
	SSI+Tam	8	2	3	9	22

How do respondents from the different villages feel about specific combinations of bongso brothers and sisters who live together out of wedlock and have a child? I started from the assumption that respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Siri-Sori Serani could not be bongso to each other and therefore expected that all respondents from the pela alliance of Siri-Sori–Hutumuri–Tamilou would tolerate a relationship of whatever kind. However, Table 2 shows that the respondents do not have firm opinions about this. I think the division of Siri-Sori has created confusion among the pela members, confusion that extends to the combinations SSI+Tam,

SSS+Hut, and SSI+Hut (Table 2). The respondents from Hutumuri and Tamilou consider the combination SSI+Tam impossible, while the others are undecided. As for the combination SSI+Hut, the opinions of the respondents from Hutumuri are clear: having a child and living together is not allowed. The opinions of the respondents from Siri-Sori and Tamilou are divided here. The respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Tamilou do not have firm opinions about the combination SSS+Hut. The others show slight disapproval of such a relationship.

Table 3: Responses from Hutumuri, Tamilou, Siri-Sori Islam, and Siri-Sori Serani on having a child, and not living together

<i>pela mem- bers from</i>	<i>village combination</i>	<i>allowed</i>	<i>do not know</i>	<i>own decision</i>	<i>not allowed</i>	<i>n</i>
Hutumuri Q = 0.0000	SSS+Tam	–	1	–	20	21
	Tam+Hut	–	–	–	21	21
	SSI+SSS	–	1	11	9	21
	SSI+Hut	–	–	–	21	21
	SSS+Hut	–	–	–	21	21
	SSI+Tam	–	1	–	20	21
Tamilou Q = 0.0000	SSS+Tam	–	2	1	19	22
	Tam+Hut	–	1	1	20	22
	SSI+SSS	1	8	4	9	22
	SSI+Hut	2	9	2	9	22
	SSS+Hut	1	13	1	7	22
	SSI+Tam	–	3	2	17	22
Siri-Sori Serani Q = 0.0014	SSS+Tam	2	1	1	13	17
	Tam+Hut	2	1	–	14	17
	SSI+SSS	4	1	4	8	17
	SSI+Hut	2	2	2	11	17
	SSS+Hut	2	1	1	13	17
	SSI+Tam	3	1	6	7	17
Siri-Sori Islam Q = 0.0253	SSS+Tam	2	8	2	10	22
	Tam+Hut	–	6	2	11	19
	SSI+SSS	5	3	2	12	22
	SSI+Hut	3	7	–	12	22
	SSS+Hut	4	7	1	8	20
	SSI+Tam	4	4	2	12	22

What happens when two pela members have a child together but do not actually live together? Will that make any difference to the respondents? Judging from Table 3, the respondents are still divided about the combinations SSI+SSS, SSI+Hut, SSS+Hut, and SSI+Tam. The respondents from Hutumuri are the only ones to hold the same views about the combinations

SSI+Hut and SSS+Hut. With regard to the combination SSI+Tam, it is chiefly the respondents from Siri-Sori who do not express an undivided opinion. These responses indicate that opinions on marriage and alternative relationships differ widely. The fact that the village of Siri-Sori split may have contributed to this confusion.

Acting according to the adatpela

So far, we have discussed the respondents' views on the rules of social behaviour. The next step is to determine how these rules are acted upon. The question to be considered is: Did the respondents ever actually act according to the rules? The question was formulated as follows: "Did you ever help a bongso with a special event such as a wedding or a death?" The event does not necessarily have to have taken place in another village; the bongso may live in the same village as the respondent. Most of the respondents who answered this question affirmatively come from the villages of Tamilou and Siri-Sori Serani. They share the same norm (helping a bongso) but they are also motivated to take part in special events such as weddings. The respondents from Siri-Sori Islam and Hutumuri were less involved in special occasions. We can only guess at possible reasons: illness, other appointments, ignorance of the event, not able to help. Again it is remarkable that the respondents from Hutumuri mostly helped pela members from Siri-Sori Serani and the other way round. This is another indication that they feel closer to each other because they share the same religion.

Predictions about future behavior

The question here to be considered here is: what would the respondents do if an opportunity arose in which the rules should be applied? The respondents were asked: Would you immediately help a bongso in trouble? What would you do if a bongso asked you for something that is very dear to you? How would the respondents react to such situations? Most respondents claim that they would immediately help a pela member in need. The following story, told by a man from Tamilou, illustrates this.

"If I am in trouble for instance, and someone from Siri-Sori hears about it, he will come to me as quickly as possible. The same goes for me; when I hear that someone in Hutumuri or Siri-Sori is in trouble I will act immediately. I will go there at once. I will see what I can do to help. I will do all I can to help him, out of love." (Huwaë 1991: 110)

There are also however, respondents (mostly those from Siri-Sori Islam) who want to take circumstances into account before they are willing to take action. (See Table 4.)

It is one's duty to help a pela member who has problems. A respondent from Tamilou used the following words to describe to what extent he feels obliged to help a fellow pela member:

"When we need help, other bongsos have to help us. We have certain obligations towards our bongsos. These obligations are fixed. When my family needs the help of a certain government institution, and a bongso happens to work there, (s)he is obliged to help us if (s)he can. But if someone from my family has committed an offense, and a bongso happens to work at the police station, the obligation no longer applies; in such a case the government has priority." (Huwaë 1991: 112)

All in all, most respondents would help a pela member in trouble if they it were within their power.

In a situation in which a fellow pela member asks for something that is very dear to the respondents, two types of reaction are possible: the respondent either gives the requested object away, or (s)he tries to find a way out of his/her dilemma. The latter reaction is especially evident in the respondents from Hutumuri and Tamilou. They tend to want to give priority to their own interests.

Table 4: Pela member responses to "Would you help a bongso in distress?"

<i>pela members from</i>	<i>immediately</i>	<i>depends on situation</i>	<i>do not know</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>n</i>
Siri-Sori Islam	5	14	2	1	22
Hutumuri	19	2	–	–	21
Tamilou	14	7	1	–	22
Siri-Sori Serani	11	5	1	–	17

$$\chi^2 = 0.00726^4$$

5. Pela: Collectivism and role-variants

Why do pela members take pela for granted? Pela is one of the most important patterns of the Malukan culture. Clifford Geertz (1973: 216) describes culture patterns as programs; "they provide a template or blueprint

⁴When frequencies in discrete categories (either nominal or ordinal) constitute the data of research, the chi-square test may be used to determine the significance of the differences among independent groups.

for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide such a template for the organization of organic processes.”

Culture is a collective phenomenon, shared to a greater or lesser extent by people who live in the same social environment. The assumption is that most people in the world live in societies in which the interest of the group prevails over that of the individual. G. Hofstede calls such societies collectivistic, by which he means “a society in which people are received, from birth into strong, close-knit groups that offer lifelong protection in exchange for unconditional loyalty” (1991: 332).

The pela alliance of Tamilou–Siri-Sori–Hutumuri is also collectivistic. Its *raison d’être* was to preserve and strengthen family ties between the villages. Pela members are very close to each other. In my conversations with respondents, the ties between fellow bongsos were often compared with the ties between brothers and/or sisters. One respondent described his views on the relationship between fellow pela as follows.

“The relationship between pela members is as close as that between brothers and sisters. If we need help, the other bongsos are obliged to help us.” (Huwaë 1991: 89)

Unconditional loyalty means observing the rules laid down by the ancestors. The rules are like roles; “statements about how people are expected, and therefore, in the eyes of others, obliged, to behave in certain circumstances” (Homans 1974: 335). Most pela members act according to these rules. They meet the expectations imposed on them by their roles. They do not get angry with a fellow pela member, do not lie to a fellow pela member, and do not make fun of a fellow pela member. The rule prescribing the giving of help with a funeral or village feast, the rule about supporting fellow pelas in trouble and the rule forbidding certain marriages are observed by almost everyone. The pela members are role takers with a well-defined position in the role system. The pela system functions because these roles have been institutionalized. However, “even under the most favourable circumstances, many people do not behave as they ought to behave, and ... many more depart systematically from their roles in times of social change” (Homans 1974: 335). My research results bear this out. Raymond Boudon ascribes this to the autonomy of the role taker. “In practice roles are never so clearly defined that there is no freedom of action for the role taker” (Boudon 1981: 56; my trans.).

The autonomy of the role taker can largely be attributed to his freedom of interpretation.⁵ The rule forbids marriage between members of the pela alliances of Tamilou–Hutumuri–Siri–Sori and many pela members live up to that rule. There are no explicit statements about alternative love relationships in the adapela, however. Acceptance or nonacceptance of such alternative relationships depends on one's interpretation of the rules. "Normative patterns are to an important degree generalized relative to the particularity of the situations in which they apply ... In proportion, as the pattern becomes more generalized and hence 'abstract', the problem of 'interpretation' becomes accentuated" (Parsons 1951: 269).

In order to find out how pela members interpret the acceptability of alternative love relationships with other pela members, I presented them with the following three alternatives: (1) courtship, (2) cohabitation and having a child out of wedlock, (3) living apart and having a child. Some of the respondents interpret the rules to mean that not being allowed to marry a bongso also excludes the possibility of courting a bongso. Others interpret the rule more freely. They hold personal views on the consequences of such relationships.

With the exception of the combinations SSS+Tam and Tam+Hut, the respondents showed that they have views of their own about intimate relationships between inhabitants of the different villages. Here, personal opinion prevails over the expectations imposed by the role pattern. It is striking that only respondents from Hutumuri hold firm views on the acceptability of intimate relationships outside marriage. They are opposed, irrespective of village combination.

It appears that personal views and standards may emerge in situations involving emotional conflict. Such situations occur in everyday life, at work or at school, where pela members are confronted with rules based on the *pancasila*, the five basic principles of the Indonesian Republic.⁶ The Indonesian Republic emphasizes national consciousness. The unity of the

⁵R. Boudon (1981: 56–57; my trans.) distinguishes four main causes for the autonomy of the role taker: (1) freedom of interpretation; (2) normative contradictions that sometimes occur within a role; (3) the complex nature of some roles; (4) conflicting roles.

⁶The five basic principles are: (1) faith in God Almighty, (2) a just and civilized humanity, (3) the unity of Indonesia, (4) democracy guided by the wisdom of the representatives of the people, (5) social justice for the entire Indonesian population (Ro'is 1987: 343; my trans.).

state is put before regional differences (Pollman & Seleky 1982: 54; my trans.). The government in Jakarta tries to keep Malukan consciousness under the control of the central state. Education is one of the main instruments that the government uses (Kamsteeg 1984: 24). Every Monday morning, at half past seven, the Indonesian flag is raised in every schoolyard. The national anthem is sung and the five basic principles are said out loud.

Pela members' attitude towards the adatpela is not only affected by the strong presence of the pancasila in everyday life but also by western influences and by contemporary notions stimulated by the church:

"In our village Saparua, where my parents live, there are vicars, members of the same pela alliance, who get married exactly because they are pela members. They do this because the church is against ancestor worship and adat; they want to prove that one's ancestors cannot punish one for that." (Pollman & Seleky 1982: 49; my trans.)

The pela alliance of Siri-Sori-Tamilou-Hutumuri is very special: it not only strengthens family ties but it also constitutes an environment in which Moslems and Christians can live together in peace, and help each other in difficult times.

Existing differences of opinion about adatpela are mainly due to pela members' freedom of interpretation and religion: the fact that in 1717 the village of Siri-Sori was split up into Siri-Sori Serani and Siri-Sori Islam. (See Section 2: the origin of the pela of Tamilou-Siri-Sori-Hutumuri.)

If the adatpela should fall into disuse, the brotherhood between Moslems and Christians could be endangered. This danger can only be avoided by a clear consensus about pela and the rules and agreements handed down through oral tradition.

"About 86% of the Indonesian population is Moslem. Indonesia is the world's largest Moslem nation, with 150 million Moslems" (van Veghel 1992: 21; my trans.). There is hardly any other place in the world where Moslems and Christians can live together on such friendly terms as in the islands of Maluku, where the ancestors found an ingenious solution to possible religious conflicts: the pela alliance. It is therefore of crucial importance that this alliance between Moslems and Christians be preserved.

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